

August 6th

Dearest Mary,

This morning I ~~wakened~~ ^{opened my eyes} about 4 a.m. and found myself wide awake for no apparent reason. An odd feeling overcame me that something terrible had happened, and yet it seemed foolish to feel so. Finally I went back to sleep and convinced myself that all was well. Then, when the news was broadcast at noon, I knew I had been right. The announcement of the new atomic bomb, and its use without warning, made me realize that we have passed beyond the stage of amateur evil. Man has openly begun to lay plans for his own destruction.

Perhaps I feel this too strongly — perhaps it will develop that this new explosive is only effective to a greater degree than others. The announcements of the commentators are of course laying accent on the such Nagers aspect of the invention. But regardless of the degree, and despite the limited effect, the fact remains that we have unleashed a new source of power, not for the betterment of our race, but for mutual destruction. What good is it to shorten this war — and indeed, to do it by brutal murder if it only makes the next one more horrible? To sanction its use is perhaps no worse than sanctioning any other of our "civilized" weapons. It must surely make us see that we are neither Christian nor humane, and that we have total disregard for human lives.

What makes me most fearful and ashamed is that highly regarded physicists have developed this thing, using the highest forms of our science. I can think of no greater disgrace than to have made possible such a weapon. Of course, the argument will be that it was better to have ~~been~~ developed ^{it} here first, and that by maintaining proper custody we can make it a weapon for peace and progress. This is all true — we have all dreamed of a new source of power, which would raise standards of living all over the world. But still they have used it first for destruction, thus setting a horrible pattern for the next half-century. Have we no proper custodians of such power? It would seem not.

You will probably think I am overly excited by this — but knowing you, I feel that you will understand my opinions. Now it is imperative that we keep peace at any price — for the one we pay for war would far outweigh the false prides of nationalism. If this could shock us into an international repudiation of war forever, it would be good. But after years have passed, and power becomes so easy to throw about, I have no doubt that our childish fellows will seek to rule one another again. Of one thing I am certain — it is not science which is at fault, but man, who seeks to use it for evil. Generation of vipers — surely we shall be punished for this.

Oh, Mary — I wish I could talk to you tonight. When I look about at these people and see that they are unaffected and unmoved, I realize how it could happen. Maybe I am the one who is queer!

No letter from A.W. today — maybe, there'll be 2 tomorrow, I hope, I hope, I hope! Crockett, who is ~~back~~ again, noted the omission and implied that I was "slipping." But I assured him that the letters were still coming regularly and that I was "the one." He said he was sorry he didn't get to Manchester to collect his kiss, and I sympathized with him in heartfelt fashion. Incidentally, he said he'd like to get the Beacon regularly, and I assured him that you would send it to him! Hope you don't murder me for it!

Today was an ordinarily busy day, and the heat was just about as oppressive as always. The saluting campaign is still on — I was stopped by a Capt. (a returnee, too) who wanted to know why I didn't salute him. I think before the interview was over he felt more foolish than I. But I didn't tell him, as I told Doorman, that I didn't believe in all this stuff! He (V.L.A.) said nothing, but probably will hold it against me someday. Good!

Being excessively serious, I have not been in an especially humorous mood all day. More than ever, if that can be possible, I have missed you every second. If it were not for you I'd have little to believe in — but as it is, I still have much hope, for us and for our generations. I love you, Mary — don't ever forget that.

Good night, darling

Gene